

Chancellor's Community Forum
Five Year Plan
November 12, 2008
Patterson ES
6:30 – 8:00pm
Zac Morford

The notes below reflect our effort to summarize the comments, questions and concerns expressed at each meeting. They are not recorded verbatim and should not be considered direct quotations.

Overview: The discussion was centered on the need for teacher aides in kindergarten classrooms. Zac Morford answered the questions to the best of his ability in reference to aides. He answered questions about the overcrowding in the classrooms and the lack of resources for the teachers. Abigail Smith also touched on resources for the teachers while she was there. Teachers felt overwhelmed and under supported with the amount they are asked to do with such large classes. The main concern overall was the lack of help for kindergarten teachers, overcrowding in the classrooms, and lack of resources.

Presenter/Moderator: Abigail Smith, Chief of Transformation Management
Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

Panelist: Zac Morford, Director of SchoolStat

Other DCPS Staff: Quiana Scott, Outreach Specialist, Parent & Family Resource Centers, Ward 8

Codes

ZM = Zac Morford, Director of SchoolStat

MR = Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

AS = Abigail Smith, Chief of Transformation Management

PO'B = Peggy O'Brien, Chief of Family & Public Engagement

QS = Quiana Scott, Outreach Specialist, Parent & Family Resource Center, Ward 8

CM = Community Member Ms. Hill (Patterson Parent) = MH

Notes:

ZM: *How do we engage the community? What information is useful?*

CM: *How does the 5 Year Plan & the MEP filter down to the classrooms?*

ZM: How does child see benefit of the plan?; Every school needs a strong leader. We need to support our teachers so that they can understand the programs and apply the concepts. It's the role of central office to equip the principals and teachers; pretty generalized answer.

AS: We are having instructional coaches work with teachers. We have to make sure the teachers have good coaches. We need to make teachers feel supported. We want everyone to be included and ask us did you deliver?

CM: *If resources are not with the teacher right now, what will be done the rest of this year to make sure the teachers get the help they need?*

AS: *What resources are you referring to?*

CM: Teachers do not have the materials necessary to teach. We made calls about not having books for teachers but the books never came; teachers were sharing books until they arrived. Everyone should have everything they need. \

AS: Children should have text books on day one. We made progress on text book delivery since Chancellor Rhee has come on board. We have people focused on systems piece. These types of things are in the one year plan. Another piece is the **Critical Response Team**. Their entire job is to respond to these kinds of issues.

CM: *What is the Critical Response team?*

CM: It is good to have these plans but there needs to be follow up. Schools are not prepared for merges.

CM: There are different neighborhoods in the same school and behavior problems from kids. There are **aides** who didn't pass the certification test and was fired. Sometimes **aides** are better than some teachers. Kindergarten classes have no **aides**. People who were let go were very valuable to the school system. Now there is no help for teachers. 1st grade teachers do not have **aides**; they have no resources and still trying to teach.

CM: First grade is critical. There needs to be more emphasis on Kindergarten and 1st grade. I tested kids and they didn't know letters and sounds.

ZM: Questions regarding **aides** should be asked to Chancellor as I do not know much about the process.

In looking at enrollment process; every year it is unknown where kids will show up. One thing being done is we are making sure that there is the appropriate number teachers for students.

CM: Could the **Critical Response Team** take care of **aide** situation?

PO'B: Ask the Chancellor to come in answer question about **aides** as it comes from the federal government.

CM: It seems as though something needs to happen or achievement level will not be where it needs to be.

CM: 1st graders are very needy. I need a volunteer to come in and help out in case I need assistance.

CM: Kids cannot read well.

CM: There is one **aide** in the whole school; she rotates the whole kindergarten.

CM: Kids could be below basic.

CM: We do not have the resources in the schools to help these kids.

CM: There are 29 students in the 2nd grade at his school and 30 students in 4th grade. I had the best test scores in the building last year. Emery is a **STEM** school, but I don't have internet in my classroom. I have to walk around to find a signal.

CM: There are too many people in management. There should be more resources at the bottom – on the school level. A lot of people at the forum I have never seen before. I am a union representative. The money is at the top and there is none for the kids. When there are too many managers not enough people in the classroom, goals are not met.

ZM: There is no question that we need appropriate class sizes. There is a major effort to get school psychologists and social workers in every school to support our students..

CM: There are three administrators for 248 children.

CM: *Why are teachers given so much to do when we should be concentrating on working with the kids?*

MR: I have no control over the **para-professionals** issue. DC is the only school district on high risk status with the US Department of Education. We are under high scrutiny. I am advocating change regarding the way we are thinking about highly qualified to highly effective **aides** and have been doing so for about a year now. In terms of **aides** at the first grade level, the city is facing a money deficit and we are trying to protect the budget. The mayor is fighting to keep school budgets intact. One of the things to do is to think about all adults in a single building and how to use them all.

CM: There are students who do not know letters and sounds. Emphasis should be spent on the Kindergarten level.

MR: We are looking at those problems and are not trying to pass kids from one grade to the next grade without knowing standards.

CM: When kids left 1st grade they weren't ready.

MR: When kids are passed without the necessary skills, it puts teacher at a disadvantage as well. The responsibility is greater. The number of things that have to be done to prepare the student increases too. One thing to address that issue is very specific structured academic interventions like rigorous **after-school programs**.

CM: We do not have the proper things in the classroom – we still don't have those things this year.

MR: We are on a fixed schedule with repairs. There are deplorable conditions in schools. Repairing everything will take some time. Yes, it will be a third of school year to have all of that happen.

There are no **aides** in 1st grade classrooms. It isn't in the budget. The only exception is if a school has its own internal **budget** to hire an **aide**.

CM: High school volunteers could get their volunteers hours this way.

MR: A lot of students are on a shortened schedule in high school and community hours are needed so that could work.

CM: Is there a stipend for students?

CM: *Could you talk about closing schools and having low staff?*

MR: In the summer, we estimated where kids would go and then built a budget. As this was an estimate, we went through an **equalization process**. The staff was pulled out of schools that are under enrolled and put into over enrolled schools. Next year we will have a huge pre-enrollment and pre-registration process, but this requires community effort. We anticipate next year's **enrollment** process to go smoother.

CM: My daughter has too many students in her class. I addressed the teacher at at Parent Teacher Conference. *How can the teacher comment on what my daughter needs with so many students?*

MR: There needs to be greater alignment. Parents should not be blind sided. We need to have professional development with teachers on providing parents with conversation about level of child.

ZM: Part of it is making sure that the class is the right size.

CM: DC is under high scrutiny because of funding.

CM: My concern is that you can't get **aides** in the classrooms so the problem persists.

CM: Who will do **Dibels**?

ZM: The teacher has to do **Dibels** while someone else is there to help support the classroom. It is harder when someone else does **Dibels**.

CM: There is no **aide** in a classroom with 29 kindergarten children.

ZM: That is a problem when there are too many children and too few teachers.

CM: I went into a classroom in Maryland's school system. The school had all resources it needed. They were doing **Dibels**. What's wrong with our support?

ZM: When do you pull a teacher away from other schools? How do you create the balance? We hired 570 new ET-15 (teachers) this summer.